

# Basic Knife Techniques

## KNIFE GRIPS

### HANDLE GRIP

The handle grip is often favored by cooks with smaller hands. This grip also causes fewer calluses for cooks who spend a lot of time working with knives.



1. Letting the knife rest in your open hand, hold your four fingers together perpendicular to the knife. Your thumb should be relaxed and positioned parallel to the knife.



2. Fold your fingers over the handle and, at the same time, tighten the grasp of your palm. Your thumb should remain in its relaxed position.



3. Turn the knife so that it is now at a right angle to the cutting surface. Then rest your thumb on the side of the handle, opposite the index finger, and you are ready to begin.

### BLADE GRIP

This grip is often used by cooks with larger hands, who find it difficult to comfortably fit four fingers under the knife handle. This grip requires a bit more strength in the wrists and fingers. Because the hand is moved slightly forward, this grip can also provide somewhat more control over the blade.



1. Let the knife rest in your open hand, with the index finger on the blade and your other three fingers perpendicular to the knife. Fold your fingers and tighten the grasp of your palm. The tip of the index finger should now be touching the bolster (the metal shank between the blade and the handle) and the index finger itself should rest flat against the blade.



2. Now place your thumb on the blade. The tip of the thumb should be on the opposite side of the blade from the second joint of the index finger.



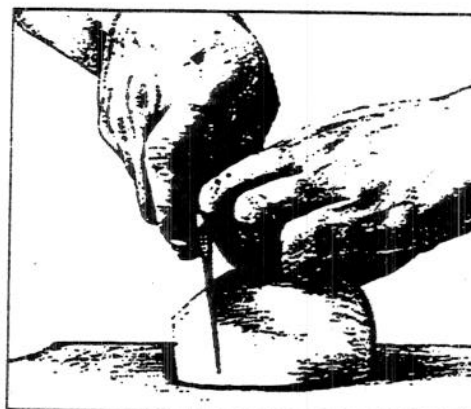
3. Turn the knife so that it is now at a right angle to the cutting surface, and you are ready to begin cutting.

## GUIDING HAND

There are two ways to position the hand that is not holding the knife. Both are designed to prevent slippage, to control the size of the cut, and to protect the hand holding the item being cut. The one you use is simply a matter of which feels most comfortable and natural.

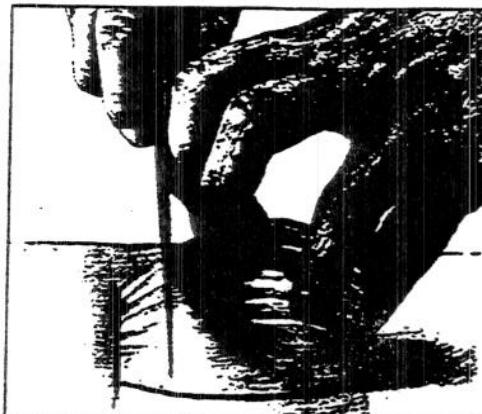
### THE CLAW METHOD

In this method, the first joints of the fingers of the noncutting hand actually rest on the item being cut. The thumb and little finger should be parallel to each other and the three other fingers fairly close together. The blade should rest against the knuckle, which provides guidance but is in no danger of being cut.



### THE PARALLEL FINGER METHOD

In this method, the thumb and little finger are placed parallel to each other on the item being cut, the middle finger at the summit, and the other two fingers evenly spaced between them. The fingers remain bent so the blade can rest against the knuckle, providing guidance with no danger of being cut.



## Pépin's Pepper

**B**anished to the back of a kitchen cupboard too high to reach without

a step stool, my collection of pepper grinders gathers dust. There's a square Lucite number that lets you see the pepper grinding (if the pepper ever did grind, which it doesn't), and six assorted pumped-up wooden grinders, each one uglier than the next and all of them much more show than go. On the counter next to my stove sits the Cadillac of pepper grinders, but to get a proper grind I always have to jiggle with the tension screw. I like Jacques Pépin's low-tech trick: Spread peppercorns on a cutting board and use the bottom of a small pan to crush them to the grind you need. —*Christopher Hirsheimer*

K I T C H E N

